

an increase on this side, the question is what do you add to it to get it passed?

Mr. FORD. The only question I was concerned about is that originally we had four or five individual votes and then that would have been included in a total package, with the coupling of maybe a poison pill or two there, that the President may not particularly like and said he would have to veto that with that pill. If we get the House bill and then that is a stand-alone, and we get the amendments and let the Senate work its will, I think we are getting very close to an agreement on minimum wage. I thank the majority leader.

Mr. DOLE. I will be happy to take it up with the leadership on my side and, hopefully, be able to go to the Democratic leader and the Senator from Kentucky with some proposal to be accepted.

I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 1 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for not to exceed 5 minutes each.

Who seeks recognition?

The Senator from Louisiana.

WELFARE REFORM

Mr. BREAUX. Mr. President, I think our Democratic leader is on his way. I will certainly yield to him at the time he comes for any remarks he would like to make. But I would like to just take some time in his absence to comment on one of the comments made by the majority leader, Senator DOLE, regarding welfare and welfare reform.

I think there is a growing consensus on behalf of both sides of the aisle that a welfare reform bill is achievable. It is achievable in this Congress this year. I think we are getting very, very close. The President of the United States has said some favorable things about the welfare plan that has been proposed by the Republican Governor of Wisconsin, Senator Thompson. I think the President made it very clear on the previous bill, the so-called Dole-Gingrich welfare reform bill that the President vetoed, that he vetoed it for a very specific reason. He vetoed it because it did not provide for adequate health care for children and he vetoed it because it did not provide for additional child care funding for children of welfare parents.

The President's stated position on welfare reform is that it should be tough on work but also should be good for children. I think that is the right approach. I do not think there is anyone in America who wants to be tough on welfare who wants to be tough and unfair to innocent children who did not ask to be born into this world.

Yes; be tough on the parents. Yes; put time limits on welfare. Yes; cut

able-bodied parents off of welfare if they refuse to work. But let us make sure that this Nation, as great as it is, takes care of innocent children who did not ask to be born.

So I think the President made it very clear he would support his understanding of what was in the Wisconsin plan if it, in fact, took care of children by providing Medicaid or health care for those children and also additional child care funding. That is why he vetoed the previous welfare bill that had been sent to him, because it simply did not provide for those two major ingredients.

If the Wisconsin plan meets those standards, I think it is one that can be signed. I think the comments of the President yesterday while he was in Wisconsin really said exactly that, that he would support a welfare reform even if it's a Republican plan, or a Democratic plan; it doesn't make any difference who has authored it. But he also said, "So, what I say, if this is Senator DOLE's plan"—meaning a plan that provided for health care for children and for child care funding for children, that, if that is in the plan, "I think what he ought to do is pass his plan through this Congress before he leaves the Senate and I will sign it." That was a statement that I agree with, that, if a plan is presented that provides medical care for innocent children and if it is a plan that provides for child care funding so the parents can go to work, then it is a plan that, indeed, the President would want to sign.

So I think we are close. I commend the latest plan that I saw coming from our Republican colleagues for the closeness that it allows the two bodies to get together on an agreement. What I point out is that my review of what they are trying to do with their plan is, I think, very positive, in the sense that it does some things in the direction of providing more for child care, a very positive thing; it has tough new work rules in the Republican proposal, and that is good; it has a larger contingency fund for States in an economic downturn, and that is good. So there are a number of really good things in the new Republican plan that moves it closer to what we as Democrats have been trying to get accomplished.

But there are, I think, some deficiencies. I think these deficiencies are not such that they cannot be corrected, but the deficiencies, I think, are significant. For instance, they provide no vouchers for children after the parents have been cut off of welfare assistance.

What do you do, I would say to our colleagues, when you tell a parent you are not going to get any more assistance after 2 or 3 years—what are you going to say to a 2-year-old child, a baby, an infant, or a child that has no way to support itself and gets sick? Are we not going to have any help for innocent children? I think that is wrong.

Be as tough as we possibly can on parents and make them go to work and

say, "If you don't go to work, you are going to lose your benefits," and say, "There is a certain time limit that you have to get to work if you are capable of doing it." But, unfortunately, there are going to be some who do not meet those standards and unfortunately they are going to be some children who are going to be innocent victims unless we find a way to take care of them. I suggest if we do not take care of them in the short term we are going to be spending a great deal more money in the long-term taking care of medical problems.

So I suggest that we ought to bring up the welfare bill as soon as we can. Do not tie it down with other things that are still in dispute, like Medicare or Medicaid or other controversial issues. Let us face it. If we can get an agreement on welfare, let us do it and let us quit arguing about who will get the credit. There is enough credit for everybody. Everybody will win if we come to an agreement that makes sense. But everybody loses if we continue to fight it from a political standpoint and not address it from a humanitarian standpoint. Let us be tough on reform, but help children.

I am encouraged we are getting closer on welfare reform. I will again say the new proposal from the Republican side is a very positive step. This allows us to sit and negotiate over just a couple of items and be able to say, "Yes, we can produce a bipartisan welfare plan which will be good for the country."

I hope we can do it very quickly. I think it can be a product this President will sign very quickly. So what if you have a signing ceremony and Senator BOB DOLE comes down and President Bill Clinton comes down and signs the same piece of legislation. Is that not good for this country? Is that not why we are supposed to be here? I think the answer is yes.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum, since no one is apparently waiting to speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I see no colleagues on the floor today. We do not have record votes. I expect there are very few Senators here. I know we are in a period for morning business with a 5-minute limitation. I ask unanimous consent to be allowed to speak for 20 minutes in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DORGAN. If the minority leader or others come and need to take some time, I will be happy to accommodate them.